

George Washington to Israel Putnam, May 21, 1776, two same date; Orders, The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.

***To MAJOR GENERAL ISRAEL PUTNAM**

Head Quarters, City of New York, May 21, 1776.

Sir: The Congress having been pleased to signify a desire that I should repair to Philadelphia, in order to advise and consult with them on the present posture of affairs, and as I am on the point of setting out accordingly; I have to desire that you will cause the different Works now in agitation to be carried on with the utmost expedition,¹ to this end I have wrote to the Provincial Congress (of this Colony) for Tools and have hopes of obtaining them. Apply therefore accordingly, takg an exact acct. of what you receive.

The Works upon Long Island should be compleated as expeditiously as possible, so should those in and about this Town, and upon Governors Island. If New Works can be carried on without detriment to the old, (for want of Tools) I would have that intended at Powles hook,² set abt. immediately as I conceive it to be of Importance, in like manner would I have that at the Narrows begun, provided Colo. Knox, after his arrangement of the Artillery should find that there are any fit pieces of Cannon to be spared for it: otherwise, as I have no longer any dependance upon Cannon from Admiral Hopkins, it wd. be useless.

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The Barriers of those Streets leading from the Water are not to be meddled with; and where they have been pull'd down are to be repaired, and [erected] nearer the Water if more advantageous.

As it does not appear to me improbable that the Enemy may attempt to run past our Batteries in, and about the Town, and Land between them and the woody grounds above Mr. Scot's, I would have you imploy as many Men as you can in throwing up Fleches at proper places, and distances within that space in order to give opposition in Landing but if there are not Tools enough to carry on the other (more essential) Works and these at the same Instant you are not to neglect the first but esteem these as secondary considerations only.

Delay not a Moment's time to have the Signals fixed for the purpose of communicating an alarm upon the first appearance of the Enemy, let them be placed in such a Manner, and at such distances, as to be easily discerned; day, or Night. If this was continued upon the long Island Shore for some distance, good consequences might result from it; as nothing can be attended with more signal advantages than having timely notice of the Enemy's approach whilst nothing can add more to the disgrace of an Officer than to be surprizd; for this reason I have to beg that the same vigilance and precaution may be used as if the Enemy were actually within sight; as a brisk Wind, and flowing tide will soon produce them when they are once on the coast, the Officers and Men therefore shd. be constantly at their Qrs. the Guards alert and every thing in Readiness for immediate action.

As I have great reason to fear that the Fortifications in the High lands are in a bad situation, and the Garrisons on Acct. of Arms worse; I would have you send Brigadier Lord Stirling with Colo. Putnam (and Colo. Knox if he can be spared) up there, to see report and direct such alterations, as shall be judg'd necessary for putting them into a fit, and proper posture of defence.

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Open any Letters which may come directed to me upon Public Service whilst I am absent; and if any very Interesting advices should be contained therein, either from the Eastward, or Northward, forward them on to Philadelphia after regulating your conduct thereby.

I must again beg that your particular Attention may be turned to our Powder Magazines to see that that that valuable Article is properly placed and Secured. I also beg that no time or Means be neglected to make as many Musket Cartridges as possible.

Putnam, as senior major general, was left in command at New York.

Zowles Hook, now Jersey City, N.J. The spelling used by the British and all who followed their engineer maps is Zaulus Hook. Washington and other Americans usually spell it Zowles; the British, having only the sound of the name, spelled it phonetically. William H. Richardson, historian of the Zavonia Tercentenary Celebration, 1930, has definitely settled the point.